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On *Chuan-chu* 轉注

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Among the *Liu-shu* 六書 (Six Kinds of Writing), the classification of Chinese characters which was in use in teaching the children of nobles during the Chou dynasty, only *chuan-chu* has not yet been explained although various opinions have been offered by many scholars since early times. The reason lies in the ambiguity of the definition and the examples given in the *Shuo-wên* 說文. Many scholars, Tai Chên 戴震 among others, have confirmed that in some way similar to *chia-chieh* 假借 (phonetic loan) *chuan-chu* describes a certain way of using characters, but exactly what use has remained unclear.

Having some acquaintance with the usage of the logographic systems of Egyptian and cuneiform writings, the writer has found a use of characters that may offer an explanation of *chuan-chu*. It is the homographic use of a character applied to another word which is semantically associated to the word for which the character had originally been made. This usage could occasionally be seen, as in the characters 車 or 乘。 In the archaic records of China, more examples can be found. The wording of the definition of *chuan-chu* and its examples in the *Shuo-wên* is made intelligible if we assume that it is an homographic use of a character among semantically related words.